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Monday, November 16, 2015

The OA Interviews: ScienceOpen's Alexander Grossmann

In his time, the founder and president of ScienceOpen, Alexander Grossmann, has sat on both sides of the scholarly publishing table. He started out as a researcher and lecturer, working variously at the Jülich Research Centre, the Max Planck Institute in Munich and the University of Tübingen.

Alexander Grossmann

Then in 2001 he reinvented himself as a publisher, working first at Wiley-Blackwell, and subsequently as managing director at Springer-Verlag GmbH in Vienna, and a vice president at De Gruyter.

An important moment for Grossmann came in 2008, when Springer acquired the open-access publisher BioMed Central from serial entrepreneur Vitek Tracz. Listening to a presentation on the purchase given at a management meeting by the company's CEO Derk Haank, Grossmann immediately saw the logic of the move, and the imperatives of open access.

However, it was soon apparent to him that the publishing industry at large is not in a hurry to reinvent itself for an OA world, and certainly not if it means having to take hard decisions that could threaten the high profit levels that it has become accustomed to earning from journal publishing.

Speaking to me two years ago Grossmann put it this way: "[T]here is no publishing house which is either able or willing to consider the rigorous change in their business models which would be required to actively pursue an open access publishing concept."

And this remains his view today.

In 2013, therefore, Grossmann partnered with Boston-based entrepreneur and software developer Tibor Tscheke to found a for-profit OA venture called ScienceOpen. At the same time he took a post as professor of publishing management at the Leipzig University of Applied Sciences.

A Q&A with Alexander can be downloaded as a pdf file here.

Posted by Richard Poynder at 14:33

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